



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, Jr.
Deputy Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
The White House

FROM: David M. Abshire

SUBJECT: Congressional Strategy: Radio Free Europe/
Radio Liberty

We are at a point in the RFE/RL legislative process where, in my judgment, extra leverage must be developed through modification of our position and through greater push at the presidential level.

In the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Fulbright's initial aim was to have no bill reported out while two prolonged studies were undertaken by the Legislative Reference Service and GAO. Senator Javits and others, particularly after our discussions of the Jewish interest in Radio Liberty, moved against that position. However, the compromise that evolved was a reversion to the original Case bill which linked RFE/RL funding to the State Department using the authority of the U.S. Information and Education Exchange Act. The desire of the Committee not to set up a new corporation at this time and to follow instead the State funding route was explained as a "stop gap measure" while a more intensive study of the funding could be carried out.

The reported bill (S 18) suddenly passed the Senate as the calendar was being cleared by Mike Mansfield in the face of general Administration criticism that the Congress was not moving quickly enough on legislation. On the House side, Chairman Morgan originally was going to have a Sub-committee handle the bill but we successfully urged him to have it done by the full Committee, again using the argument of extensive Jewish interest in Radio Liberty. Hearings will be held on September 14 and 15 with Alex Johnson as the lead-off witness and, hopefully, followed by Foy Kohler, Professor

31

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2

Brzezinski and some former residents who were listeners in Moscow and other Eastern European capitals. In other words, we will try to high posture these hearings and to get favorable publicity. Morgan has assured us of immediate mark-up on the 16th and the Speaker of quick floor action.

In my conversations with Chairman Morgan and others, it became clear that the corporation concept might also offer a stumbling block in the House, as well as in the Senate, but for different reasons. Many House Members, liberal and conservative, look with disfavor on the idea of a government corporation, i.e. the Post Office Corporation. The proposed Development Corporation in the foreign aid reorganization met with great disfavor in Committee. Dante Fascell has argued very effectively with me that it would be wiser to bypass this possible stumbling block and, under the leadership of Morgan and Fascell, emerge with a bill that would propose a commission to study for two years the radios and also to offer a vehicle for the temporary funding of the radios. He persuasively argued that any worthwhile study would take that long and should be done by experienced people. This, he said, would give the rationale for the two year authorization and enable us to bypass the difficult election year in going back for another authorization. I agree with his assessment that this rationale should give strength to the House conferees when the Fulbright Committee would adopt the argument of interim studies anyway.

Fascell proposed a Commission composed of four Senators appointed by the President of the Senate, four Congressmen appointed by the Speaker, four members of the Executive Branch appointed by the President and five private citizens with experience in the broadcasting field also appointed by the President. We are currently working with OMB to find a way to structure such a hybrid Commission so that it could both administer grants to the Radios and perform the contemplated study. Though we have found no precedent for vesting these distinctive responsibilities in such a Commission, OMB has told us that this could be done if responsibility within the Commission for funding the Radios is delegated solely to the Executive Branch appointees. We would then hope that Fascell and Morgan would adopt our suggested Commission structure as their own, in which case we would anticipate a strong likelihood of success for such a proposal in the House. If, however, Fascell and Morgan prove to be concerned about breaking the new ground with a hybrid Commission, we would attempt to work our originally proposed plan into line with

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3

their concepts so that our proposed Council (to be composed of private citizens appointed by the President, the Speaker and President of the Senate with Presidential appointees predominating) would become a two year study group which maintained its funding function.

I have also suggested to Chairman Morgan that he request a Legislative Reference study by the time of his hearings. This has been done and would mean that the House conferees would have in hand one of the studies which Senator Fulbright had anticipated would take several months.

What is now needed is White House agreement to support efforts to create a body which can administer grants to the radios and distance them from the Department. If Fascell and Morgan will take the lead on the commission idea and alter our bill in this sense, it will be best to keep them in the lead on this rather than us.

We should also be able to indicate to Members that they may approach Radio Liberty on broadcasts in Yiddish and receive favorable consideration. I believe we can further activate Jewish support in the Senate (on the Conference report) as well as in the House if Radio Liberty pledges some broadcasts in Yiddish if the future existence of the radios is assured.

It is most important that the President emphasize this issue at the first Republican Leadership meeting after the recess. I have already suggested to Clark MacGregor and have asked Secretary Rogers to suggest to Dwight Chapin that the President meet with Chairman Morgan either before or after his operation at Bethesda. We will have RFE/RL on the talking sheet.

I would like to discuss these proposals with you at your earliest convenience or to review the matter at the next LIG meeting.

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